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THE FOREST, NOT THE TREES

by Robert A. Monroe

It is astounding how intense concentration can divert attention away from the obvious. Only very recently were we made aware of the broad view of our work these many years. It may well be extremely important—far more than any single event that has taken place.

As you may already know, back in 1956, my company began a small R&D program into the possibility of data learning by rote during the sleep state. The first problem encountered was that of getting the subject to sleep when needed for testing, without the use of medication. As the parent company was one of the nation's leaders in the use of sound to evoke emotional states, it was relatively easy to develop audio patterns that performed the sleep-inducing function.

We gave it the label Frequency Following Response (FFR) when EEG studies showed similar brain-wave patterns appeared concurrently or soon after the sound stimulus was heard. Early results were quite successful. However, the project was diverted in 1958 when it was discovered that such waveforms with variations could evoke states of expanded consciousness far different from the normal waking state.

It was exciting, even frightening at times back in those early days, because what was taking place among our subjects was completely new to us and beyond our knowledge and experience. Conventional studies brought out nothing remotely close to our findings. Unorthodox areas such as meditation, hypnosis, trance states, and the like offered points of similarity, but there were differences that could not be ignored.

We continued our exploration. It was too fascinating to dismiss. We began to develop methods to induce certain repeatable states of consciousness. We gave them our own labels because we couldn't find appropriate I.D.s in scientific literature or in esoteric areas. None seemed to fit closely our results.

Through the years, assorted researchers, psychologists, philosophers, scientists, and others somehow heard of our work and came to visit or participate in our exploration. With this came much improvement and sophistication in our methods and techniques, including measurement, most of them from scientific and medical sources. We probably would have remained a quiet and obscure research facility had it not been for a single event.

In the mid seventies, Esalen Institute at Big Sur in California heard of our work and invited us to conduct a workshop there, using the methods we had developed. After that, evidently the word spread and we found ourselves with an opportunity to see the results with a wide range of subjects, far more than the eighteen we had at the time. Bullish, we called it the M-5000 Program. Later, we changed the name to the *GATEWAY VOYAGE*[®], sure that we would never reach such an optimistic goal. (It passed the 5,000 mark in 1987.)

All of this is an explanation or apology for missing the Broad View.

It happened when someone suggested a simple “teaser” line on the outside of a new brochure we were preparing:

NOW!

Learn to Control the OTHER THIRD of Your life!

SLEEP! That other third of our lives. Mysterious for the most part. Very little scientific knowledge about it except for body biological and electrical data, conflicting dream studies, variegated theories as to what really happens, and uncontrollable in most instances.

The revelation: Virtually all of the Monroe Institute activities involve constructive use of the various stages of sleep.

During planned exercises, in states physiologically identifiable as the four stages of sleep, TMI participants access and communicate with what might be identified as the unconscious, subconscious, ID, superego, autonomic system, and other areas of the human mind yet to be labeled. Until recently, the process of going to sleep and waking up had long been relegated to a secondary interest, it was so easy to establish. The prime interest has been the exploration of self under the simple condition code: Mind Awake/Body Asleep.

Under this Broad View, the Institute recognizes that it possesses only the tools and limited experience to approach such a massive undertaking as total control and constructive use of this “Other Third” of our lives. Therefore, we invite the participation and cooperation, one way or another, of sleep authorities, researchers, technicians, organizations, associations, and others in this new project.

The potentials for change in human consciousness are enormous from this Broad View.

Not the trees! The Forest!

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